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ABSTRACT

This issue discusses talent development in gifted children and youth. Articles include: (1) "Good and Goodness" (Roman Herzog), which addresses the need to provide gifted youth with financial aid to enable them to attend one of ten higher education institutions sponsoring gifted persons; (2) "It Is Essential To Start at an Early Age" (Joachim Gores), which describes a kindergarten that provides early intervention talent development; (3) "Talent Alone Is Not Enough" (Harald Wagner), which discusses the lack of educational services for gifted students and promotional models in schools; (4) "Basic Educational Questions" (Klaus K. Urban), which provides information on the definition of talent, the distinguishing features of highly gifted pupils, the possibilities of failing to recognize gifted pupils, and the role of the teacher; (5) "Motivation through Competition," which describes an association that develops and implements extramural measures to stimulate, identify, and promote gifted and interested young people; (6) "Unconventional but not Elitist" (Hermann Horstkotte), which discusses the benefits of private schools; (7) "The Joy of Achievement" (Hermann Horstkotte), which describes a private boarding school that combines social and formal education; (8) "Eton-on-Elbe" (Clemens Caspary), which highlights a European school that seeks to teach pupils how to combine social commitment with leadership qualities; (9) "Screening the Masses" (Imke Henkel), which discusses how private universities are selecting their students; and (10) "Average Mark or Interview?" (Klaus Michael Miebach), which describes a legislative bill that proposes that universities be given the right to select up to 20 percent of the students wishing to follow courses of study in nationwide admission-restricted subjects. (CR)

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Talent promotion in Germany

Talent and élite

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GOOD AND GOODNESS

Speech by Roman Herzog on talent and élite

Providing talented and motivated young persons with special assistance is one of the most important tasks of our education system. To meet the increasingly complex challenges of our world, we need people who have learned to think and work with a marked degree of competence, using their lively intelligence and endowed with a sense of social responsibility. To this end, we must systematically discover and promote talent. The question is whether and when they should receive state support. Do they not already enjoy an advantage?

The state does this initially in its own interests, are at least should do so. The social and economic future of our country depends very much on the degree of quality of work performed in the economy, politics, research and industry. Now, excellence is needed more than ever in tackling the problems confronting us. Providing gifted persons with special assistance is an investment in the future. Such support must not be merely regarded as an act of kindness. On the contrary - from the public angle - it represents the hope that this will lead to a significant contribution to the commonweal at a later date, and not merely a reward for good academic grades obtained in the past.

Naturally, as far as the recipients of such assistance are concerned, the main benefit of a scholarship from one of the ten institutions sponsoring gifted persons in the Federal Republic is one of financial relief in the initial stages. The grant, which is based on *BAFöG* (Federal Law on Support for Education and Training), does not permit recipients to live in the lap of luxury, of course. True, they are not obliged to repay the grant, but it still does not make them affluent by any stretch of the imagination.

In my opinion, however, the financial aspect does not seem to be the overriding factor. In the current situation, other things are assuming increasing importance at universities. This starts with the selection of candidates. Obviously, one cannot simply wait until the right ones apply. And, conversely, not everyone, who is prompted to apply, fulfils the inevitably strict criteria. Moreover: financial assistance is provided for talent - not basic conviction. Even though I am well aware of the fact that, because of the staff and time factors, this is no easy matter, I nevertheless firmly believe that an active search for suitable recipients of grants is also one of commitments of institutions providing financial assistance. Not only to ensure that the right persons fit the right foundation, but also to ensure - as far as possible - that talent does not go undetected. Getting hold of good and suitable scholarship holders is in the basic interest of these institutions. Indeed, the focus on talent must be increased. At the present time, too many institutions and persons throughout the field of youth work and education are too insensitive in this respect. The search for and promotion of talent must be vigilantly undertaken by schools.

One very important aspect of the work performed by institutions

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Cover: David Ausserhofer

sponsoring talent comes under the heading of "idealistic support". This concerns, first and foremost interdisciplinary activities such as vacation academies, international encounters, professional conferences and cultural symposia. In each case, it is, if you like, an absolutely essential complement to university. If the concept of "academy" still exists, then it is here.

At a time when higher education institutions are increasingly becoming places for the acquisition of certificates, for strategic examination organization or even biographical lay-bys until something better turns up, venues of intellectual exchange are the order of the day.

Financial assistance for talented persons is not just intended to make gifted physics students even better physicists. It is designed to bring together physics students with philosophers, Germanists with biologists, medical students with artists. In this context, this does not imply an occasional exchange in the attractive surroundings of an academy - after all, when all is said and done, recipients of grants are not the "Tuscan Parliamentary Group" of the student body - but persons who are acquiring and practising an attitude, one might say a basic academic virtue.

This is not a luxury which one can allow oneself on the side, but a social necessity of the first degree. One of Immanuel Kant's finest works is entitled *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (The Dispute of the Faculties). We are dependent on such a dispute of the faculties; it constitutes the basis of permanent mutual enlightenment, indeed, in all probability, of what was once called education. It could well be that, in our day and age, the distinction between an educated person and a specialist is that the former gazes beyond the confines of his own particular field.

One of the most serious deficits of the mass university is the fact that interdisciplinary dialogue has practically ceased to exist. This is more than just the loss of an academic tradition. Long-term, it will severely impair the so-called competence of the elite to solve problems. When all is said and done, all present and future problems are of an "intersecting" nature. Reality does not restrict itself to the confines of one particular faculty.

If the sponsoring institutions were to set an example by simply getting discussion or the dispute among the faculties going, they would, for this reason alone, become indispensable. One only starts to really think when one has learnt to expose oneself to completely different thought patterns. Foundations are an incitement to such thought. It justn't isn't enough for us all to be interconnected electronically. In the final analysis, interconnection is not a matter of glass fibres but a reciprocal process, something which does not take place in virtual space but which is literally "realized" in real minds.

The institutions providing gifted persons with financial support have issued a joint statement saying that they have decided on "extensive individual assistance". I think this is the right principle to adopt because individuals can only be equipped to fulfil complex tasks calling for achievement and decision if they can mature in a balanced relationship between talent, motivation and personal circumstances. Professional competence must be complemented by social competence and the ability to deal with one's personal history. In addition, he or she needs personal guidance - which is something more than "just" studies or career counselling.

One of the major challenges of the future is the globalization of economy and science, and, for us Germans in particular, the process of European unity is important. A provincial attitude will be of little use to us in the field of international competition. That is why it is right not to be penny-pinching in the financing of experience of other countries. And I am grateful to the Cusanus Organization that you also pay due attention to the countries of the so-called Third World.

The combination of intellect and belief, scientific achievement and basic values is important. Our society needs committed intellectuals and "functional executives" who offer an "ethical profile". Academic talent and intellectual brilliance cannot exempt anyone from the question: What is your personal attitude? What values are being realized or defended by you? What is your idea of a humane society? We need people who show themselves to be incorruptible vis-à-vis the short-lived *Zeitgeist*. We need people whose solidarity also embraces those who

PHOTO: KEYSTONE

can be of no personal advantage to them and whose sense of reason is not characterized by cold rationality and efficiency, but by a *raison de cœur* - in other words, from the heart, to use an old-fashioned expression.

One thing is sure - as German history in the 20th century has taught us: technical intelligence alone cannot guarantee a life worthy of humans. Our history offers us the best example of the availability and usability of a so-called functional elite. Having the best motorways, the most punctual trains and effective industrial production still does not prevent a country from being barbaric.

I do not know if it was because of this historical experience that the concept of an elite met with such great and prolonged hostility in Germany. There was and still is a school of thought which declines even to discuss whether and why an elite is needed. Neighbouring countries and the United States have fewer problems in this connection. But it is the very expe-

riences mentioned above which make it imperative to discuss the subject of an "élite". In avoiding the subject, one is merely closing one's eyes to the fact that élites do exist in one form or other. This is why I am pleased that all ten institutions have issued a joint statement: "Sponsoring talent ... has nothing to do with elitist self-sufficiency. It serves the general public in its commitment to the knowledge, ability, initiative and sense of responsibility of the coming generation." It is important that constant mention is made reflectively of this political dimension of science and culture. As a rule, we experience the plurality our of state as something beneficial. This is why, in the case of promoting talent, the state is well-advised to use the services provided by the various mediating agencies rather than undertake such sponsorship itself. As there is no such thing as "standard talent", it is a good thing when various social groups and intellectual trends keep a look-out for possible talent in their particular "catchment areas". There is nothing we need less than an officially-standardized Dr.Norm.

The creation of an élite in a human society must not simply be restricted to copying the laws of biological evolution. The creation of a human society needs more than that. I quote Michel Serres, the philosopher: "We are human by dint of the fact that we are also able to pursue aims other than that of being the best. Anyone who wants to create the conceivably best human being, ends up with a sick ape or a withered lettuce."

The genuinely human concept of "good" is also and above all linked with "goodness". This also applies to the so-called highly gifted. Academic success should not let us forget that.

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO START AT AN EARLY AGE

A kindergarten provides special help for highly-gifted children

"And what are you going to do at the weekend? Are you going to the automobile museum or would you rather play with your castle?" Helga Küppers doesn't know whether to laugh or cry as she quotes her son in an inimitable tone. For years, he has been speaking in complicated, grammtically correct sentences and interests himself in all things imaginable. Similarly-aged boys and girls, however, didn't understand him and gave him a wide berth.

Tom was becoming an outsider. Sometimes he used to sit in the corner and weep, others times he reacted aggressively towards the world around him. Then, between times, he used to make further attempts to establish contact with others. Not only the other children of his age, but even those responsible for his education seemed to speak a different language, not realizing that, in fact, too little was being asked of this unusual child. One day he came home from kindergarten - which was also attended by variously handicapped children - and said to his mother in all seriousness: "Helga, I think I'm handicapped."

"We were at our wit's end and realized that things couldn't go on like this," Tom's mother explains. At the time, the Küppers were living in Mönchengladbach. Then they got to hear about a special kindergarten in Hanover. Tom was taken there for an interview and did

several tests to provide information on his intellectual capabilities. The finding: Tom is highly gifted. He is one of the estimated two to five percent of the children born every year who are conspicuous for their good memory, highly-developed powers of logical thought and exceptional speech development. Now Tom's parents were in the picture. And they risked a radical change in their lives. They gave up their jobs - with no new ones in prospect - and moved to Hanover. The reason: there, their son could attend the *Christliches Jugenddorf* kindergarten. The latter is located in the Mittelfeld district of Hanover, close to the trade-fair site, and is the only one of its type in the whole of Germany devoted to the needs of highly-gifted children.

In this kindergarten, 60 children between the ages of three and six are given special help. As a rule, the boys and girls are divided into groups of 15, each of which is looked after by three adults in spacious surroundings. The one half are regarded as highly gifted, the others are "normal" children from the immediate neighbourhood. "We offer the talented children the opportunity - in some cases for the first time - to find suitable partners. We want to preserve and promote their strength and simultaneously reduce their deficits." Psychologist Christa Hartmann, educational head of the project, knows what she is talking about. In Braunschweig, she worked for a long time at the *Jugenddorf Christophorus* School, a boarding school which admits highly-talented pupils from Class 9 onwards. "Those coming there often had a long trail of suffering behind them. It is very difficult to get a grip on conspicuous psychic behaviour of this nature at that age. It soon became clear that the process must be started as early as possible."

One of the main deficits at this kindergarten is the highly-talented children's lack of fine motoricity. In their case, everything takes place via the head. Many lack the ability to hold a pencil properly, others are hardly able to climb. These children are offered psychomotoricity courses. Three mornings a week, the groups are mixed for a hour. Apart from psychomotoricity, the programme also includes dance and movement, creative design, religion and speech tuition. The teachers decide which courses the individual children should follow.

"The rooms in the kindergarten in our neighbourhood were dark and cold and we were treated fairly indifferently. The conditions here are so much better. There's more room, greater individual attention and special assistance," says Iris Schorling, giving the reasons why they enrolled their daughter, Georgina, at this particular kindergarten. The smallest in the "yellow group", the only all-day group, is one of the "normal" children attending the kindergarten. The scepticism shown in Mittelfeld - a district with a large proportion of working class persons, foreigners and elderly people - towards this "odd" kindergarten with its "eccentric" high-

PHOTO: DAVID AUSSERHOFER

flyers seems to have ebbed somewhat. At the present time, there are 119 children on the waiting list and interest is growing in the surrounding area. Many parents hope that the concentration of intelligence will rub off on their children.

Nicole Lammers does not reveal which of the children are the superclever ones. Even the parents swear they don't know. "One can't distinguish one child from another," says Beate Bauschmann, a member of the parents' committee. But this is not quite true. When playing in a circle, Justus has to leave the room whilst Laura hides under a sheet. All the other children sit around her. Justus comes in, glances cursorily around the group, then into the centre, and says: "Laura". Most of the others need considerably more time to find out who is hidden under the sheet.

"I just can't do it. You manage it so easily," says Max deferently to William, handing him a small book. Its title *Lernspielspaß* (Fun with Learning-Games) is appropriate for most of the children: matching objects have to be tied together with string. The correct solutions are given on the reverse side. This is no problem for William who ties the matching objects together in a flash. A few metres away, five-year-old Denis is sitting at a table with his teacher, trying to place variously-coloured cubes on outlined patterns. He is fascinated by the "special materials designed to develop logical thought processes". But now and then he likes to play car-racing with Stefan and Justus: all three race each other and laugh themselves silly when they trip over an obstacle. "The highly-talented children learn from the others how to play uninhibitedly, which they themselves find difficult," Nicole Lammers points out. Both groups benefit from each other. Activities without fixed rules often make highly-gifted children unsure: they are overwhelmed with far more impressions than they can cope with. Consequently, they frequently seek firm structures and are happy when they are occupied.

Eleven boys and girls from the kindergarten for highly-talented children have now started school. In some cases, the teachers displayed interest and contacted the group leaders. In other cases, parents have deliberately concealed the fact that their child is gifted for fear of possible disadvantages. Following a call from the majority of the parents for their children to be given special assistance in school as they were in kindergarten, and the setting-up of a private primary school was being mooted, two or three Hanover primary schools said they were prepared to fulfil this demand: "We have received the education minister's pledge that our leavers will go to schools where the teachers have taken special preparatory courses to be able to deal with exceptional talent and where new teaching materials will be used," says Christa Hartmann.

She is anxious to avoid any suggestion of preferential treatment. The parents, for instance, pay no more than they would in a municipal kindergarten - even though expenditure in Mittelfeld is considerably greater. The word "elite" is deliberately not mentioned. "The ideal of human beings whose thoughts and deeds are based on interpersonal Christian values, calls for the conscious support of each and every person in line with his or her individual capabilities". This is how the foundation describes its aims. It is what the two other kindergartens in Mittelfeld - one run by the Protestant and the other by the Catholic Church - would also like to do.

Helga Kuppers does not regret the move. The child's nurse and her husband both found work again in Hanover. In the new kindergarten, their son is no longer an outsider. "In Tom's group there are children with whom he can really converse. He is now much more relaxed and, as a consequence, the whole family feels a lot better." On taking our departure, Helga Kuppers points out that we shouldn't make too much fuss about her case because it is by no means typical. Here, she is wrong on at least two counts: like most parents of highly-gifted children, she does not boast about her child's talent, but is rather reserved and concerned. And Tom himself represents the majority of gifted boys. Girls are enrolled far less frequently in Mittelfeld. Christa Hartmann: "This predisposition is found in equal measure among boys and girls. Admittedly, undertaxed and frustrated girls usually conform more readily and do not prompt their parents to seek other solutions to the same extent. It may also be assumed that parents still help boys more than they do girls."

Joachim Gores/Frankfurter Rundschau

TALENT ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

Promotion of talented pupils in school

The *Gymnasium*: from school for talented to school for normal pupils

Harald Wagner

For a long time, the *Gymnasium* (grammar/college preparatory school) in the Federal Republic of Germany was regarded as the school where much was asked of gifted pupils who consequently received special promotional assistance. Many talented pupils, particularly from socially-weak families, however, never got near such a school,thus seriously hampering their opportunities of development. This resulted in the *Gymnasium* being made accessible to a much wider

PHOTO VISUM / GREGOR SCHLAGER

range of the pupil population in the 1960s, and in the enhancement of the overall permeability of the education system. This, of course, meant that the *Gymnasium*, as such, was simultaneously subjected to radical changes.

The school for talented pupils of the 1950s, which took in ten to twelve perecent of an age-group, of whom about six percent obtained their *Abitur* (university entrance qualification), has practically become the *Regelschule*, i.e.the generally-accepted school, for secondary education, admitting up to 40 percent of a year-group, 25 percent of whom - nationwide average - now obtain their *Abitur*. Regional percentages, particularly in large cities, are far greater.

In opening up the *Gymnasium*, the range of capability within classes has been consideraly enlarged. Teachers must tailor their demands and rate of learning to the average level of the pupils. Their attention and energy are required above all by pupils suffering from learning and achievement deficits. As a result, particularly able pupils easily disappear from view. Over a period of years, they suffer from being asked too little of, boredom and lack of motivation. Not infrequently this results - unfortunately - in a drop in standard and, in some cases, to scholastic failure.

Teachers are not sufficiently prepared for these problems during their training. They literally learn nothing about gifted pupils with their particular characteristics and requirements.

Even among teachers with many years of professional experience, one frequently comes across the attitude that highly-talented pupils have already been blessed by nature or social background anyway, and that awarding privileged pupils with further privileges would create an even wider gap between them and their average classmates. They say this cannot be reconciled with the aim of providing equal opportunity for all pupils. Gifted pupils, they argue, will make their way anyway and, consequently, teachers should preferably devote their attention to pupils who have difficulty in keeping up with the class. Furthermore, as is probably well known, teachers have more serious problems to deal with than concerning themselves with talen-

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ted pupils: countless foreign pupils with insufficient knowledge of German, maladjusted pupils, the general lack of ability to concentrate and absence of motivation - quite apart from the accumulation of ancillary administrative duties.

Promoting talent in sport and music

Let us turn our attention for a moment to two other fields of achievement: music and sport. Special promotional programmes have been devised for talent which is easily detectable at an early stage in both these fields. It is no longer unusual for highly-gifted persons to achieve outstanding performance whilst still young. Only the best teachers and coaches are good enough. No-one would harbour the idea that undeniable talent could, of its own accord, as it were, be translated into top-class achievement. Everyone knows that such excellence in sport and music is only possible with the support of first-class coaches and teachers - and an incredible amount of training and practice. It would be regarded as absurd to hold back the further development of the best person's capabilities in a group on the grounds that the weaker ones are in greater need of attention or that, since he is now an excellent pianist, he should now make good his glaring deficits in biology and French.

The contradictory assumptions about the development of human potential in the various performance sectors are obvious: what can be achieved through the employment of optimum means and extreme effort on the one hand, should manifest itself without special educational measures on the other - if this is at all worth striving for...

These problems surrounding gifted children, especially the situation in *Gymnasium*, has been receiving ever growing attention from the education ministers and school administrations in the last few years. There are plans to increase the number of further training courses for teachers, special advice centres for gifted children are being set up, and new teaching methods tried out in pilot schemes. We will go into this in greater detail later on.

The concept of talent

In dealing with questions relating to the promotion of talent, agreement must first be reached on what is meant by talent, i.e. exceptional talent. Even though there is still no generally binding definition of exceptional talent, there is consensus about the fact that there are people everywhere who, in specific fields, display capability far beyond average and which they are ready to apply. This ability can express itself in one or several of the following areas:

- in the cognitive sector

PHOTO: MANFRED VOLMER

- in the artistic and creative sector
- in the psychomotor sector (especially in sport, dance)
- in the social sector (ability to assume responsibility and play a leading role in dealing with others).

These abilities are regarded initially as dispositions or potential which can be individually applied and which have a broad development capacity. Children differ from each other quite considerably with regard to the speed, ease, curiosity and energy with which they perceive their environment, the way they learn and retain what they have learnt. If these qualities and skills are well above average, we speak of special or outstanding talent.

From disposition to top-class achievement

The following is needed to ensure that talent potential becomes apparent, and develops and manifests itself to the furthest possible limit, i.e. to first-class achievement:

- the challenge and opportunity to employ personal skills
- sustained performance motivation
- recognition and optimum support from the others (e.g. parents, teachers, coaches).

If ability is neglected it may wither, as it does in speech development, for instance. There are critical periods or "windows" in the development process in many fields of talent. If promotional assistance does not start till after this, top-class achievement - even in optimum conditions - is unattainable, e.g. in gymnastics, ballet, violin or piano- playing, chess. Gifted children are to be found everywhere and in large numbers. They exist in all social classes, both among foreign and German boys and girls, in the country and in the town.

One common practice is to regard the top two percent of an achievement scale (e.g. intelligence test) as highly gifted. In the view of many experts, however, the percentage of highly- gifted and talented children is much greater. Even if one takes the lower estimate as a basis, this means that at least 192,000 out of the 9.6 million schoolchildren in Germany are talented.

Talent alone is not enough

The drama of highly-gifted children takes place largely unnoticed and off-stage. From Class 1 onwards, their experience of school is chiefly one of inactivity, boredom and being asked too little of. They seldom see a reason to exert themselves for a particular task, and, without external encouragement or guidance, succumb all too easily to the temptations offered by the consumer and media world. According to a recently-published study by Detlef Rost, a Marburg professor of psychology, the chances of being recognized as highly gifted depends very much on performance in school. Two thirds of those who do not translate their exceptional ability into above-average achievement in school, do not strike teachers as being highly gifted.

Outstanding ability in the cognitive, sporting, musical or artistic fields is not enough to achieve an exceptional standard. It is, at most, a necessary but inadequate requirement. Only those who also display untiring willingness to devote a great deal of energy and time to the field in which they excel, have a chance of attaining an exceptional standard.

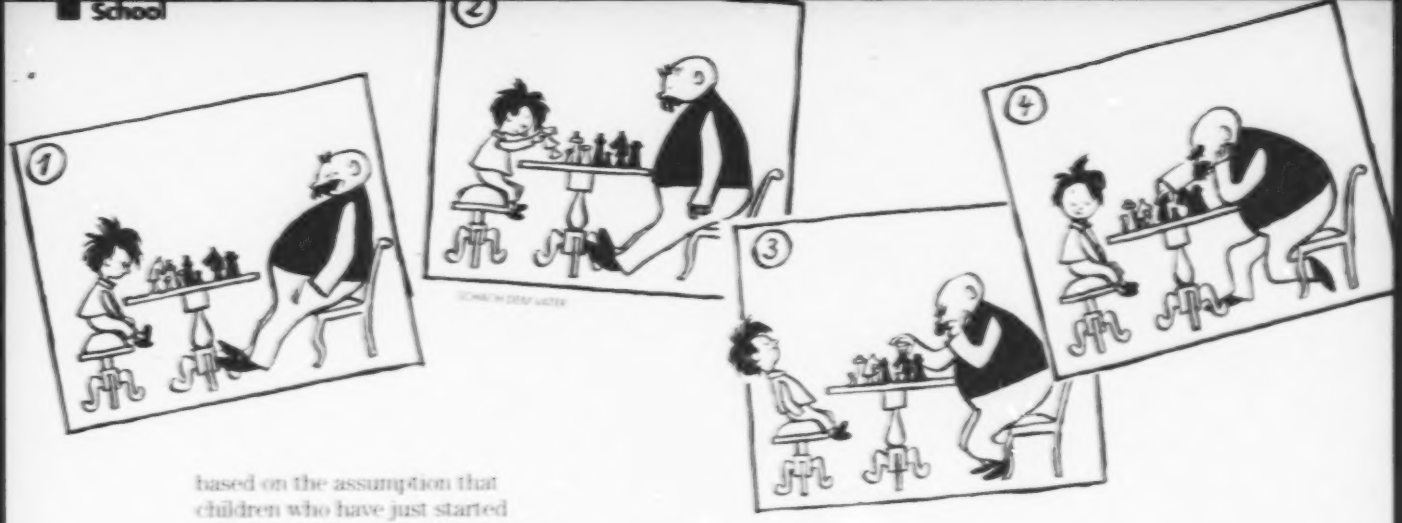
How can this readiness - psychologists refer to it as motivation - be developed, promoted and maintained? Unfortunately, there are no simple answers to this seemingly simple question. A group of experts, headed by Prof. Franz E. Weinert, from the Max Planck Institute of Psychological Research, Munich, examined this problem several years ago. Their finding: "Exceptional talent distinguishes itself by a very marked degree of individual variability and formal diversity with regard to substance. This makes response to the particular talents of the individual child essential. Since this degree of individualisation can only be realized to a certain extent, it is all the more important, by means of a flexible system of varied options, to give every gifted child the chance to select the learning content best-suited to his particular capabilities. A promotion programme for the highly talented must be open, flexible, demanding and easily accessible."

In other words, encouraging, recognizing and promoting the individual potential of every child as soon as possible is the eminently important educational duty of parents, kindergarten staff and teachers. It must be undertaken in the early years of a child's life since the course designed to develop achievement motivation is set at preschool and primary school age, especially by parents - consciously or unconsciously.

The dilemma of the primary school

When children start school, the latter assumes responsibility for their basic development and promotion of their talent. In the initial teaching phase, the range of the pupils' ability and previous knowledge is greater than anywhere else in the school system. This, of course, makes the teacher's task particularly difficult. A study by the Institute of Primary School Research in Nuremberg, published a few years ago, concerns itself with the problems surrounding fringe groups, especially low and high-performance pupils in Class 1. The authors come to the conclusion that the current school concept of initial instruction organizationally is very much to blame for the neglect of both these groups. They call for a "carefully considered enlargement of interclass didactical differentiation cooperation between several teachers, interclass achievement assessment and greater permeability in the assignment of pupils to classes."

In a successful pilot project in North Rhine-Westphalia, measures were tried out to discover how the differing learning requirements of the pupils could be met by greater individualization of instruction. To this end, the pupils planned the greater part of their learning process themselves. The teaching is



based on the assumption that children who have just started school are willing and able to learn. Learning of an actively-discovering nature, open teaching, independent work, work according to a weekly plan or project work - these are the concepts forming the hub of this educational approach.

In an open teaching situation such as this, children can be given complex tasks. The demands have no upper or lateral limits. Thus avoiding the problem of asking too little of highly-talented children. By applying their knowledge, skills, imagination and creativeness, their staying power and planning ability, they experience a promotion of important talent factors. Closely related to thoughts on a reform of the first year at school is also the question when children should actually start school. Currently, efforts are being made to abandon the rigid ruling regarding the age when children begin school in favour of more flexible models. At present, school attendance is compulsory for all children who celebrate their sixth birthday before 30 June. Any child whose birthday falls between the 1 July and 31 December can also begin school on application. For those born later than this there is no exception at the moment.

To ensure that early developers are given appropriate consideration, however, the criterion for starting school at the right time should be the child's stage of development rather than its age.

Promotion models in school

In principle, apart from individualisation (for which experience has only been gained at primary level so far), schools have, in principle, three courses of action at their disposal for the differentiated educational treatment of exceptionally able pupils: enrichment, acceleration and external differentiation or grouping.

Enrichment means extending the teaching material in breadth and depth, e.g. by the inclusion of additional material, literature or information sources, by giving the pupils special assignments, encouraging independent work, and the introduction of bilingual teaching. This is by far the most common form of promotive assistance since it involves very little additional organization or expense.

By acceleration is meant the speeding up of time spent at school and the teaching of learning material. This can be achieved, for example, by moving pupils up to a higher class.

This measure only serves some useful purpose if the pupil's overall standard is very good and if he or she can integrate quickly into the higher class. Apart from the additional gain in time, the value of jumping a class lies in the challenge to catch up on uncovered ground. A study published recently by educationalist Dr. Annette Heinbokel, Osnabrück, shows that gifted pupils seldom jump a year in Germany. Teachers and parents have great reservations and fears (very often unfounded) about taking this step. Even so, several *Bundeslander* (federal sates) have launched initiatives in recent years to facilitate gifted pupils jumping a class, thus providing them with a faster track to *Abitur*, i.e. university entrance qualification.

In three of the *Bundeslander*, pilot schemes are pursuing the same objective by reducing *Gymnasium* education from nine to eight years. This shortening of the scholastic programme is designed to offer a challenge to talented pupils. Particularly pupils with one-sided talent can be helped by having part-time instruction in their outstanding subject in a higher class - without losing contact with their own class.

Assembling and teaching particularly able and interested pupils in special groups, classes or schools is called external differentiation. The most frequent example of this is the creation of extracurricular activities, additional and intensive courses in sport, music, choral work, foreign languages, drama, natural science, philosophy etc, usually run by teachers from the school. Some schools offer as many as 50 additional courses a year which cater for almost every interest and talent. In some of the *Länder* (states) there are mathematics or physics activities which process centrally developed assignments, thus helping to reduce the time spent on preparation by those in charge.

Putting highly-gifted pupils into special schools with their own curricula within the framework of otherwise "normal" *Gymnasien* is being practised in two private schools only at present. The long years of experience gained by these schools shows that this programme is rewarding, and, in some cases, the only real alternative to normal *Gymnasium*.

Special schools are the extreme form of concentrating highly-talented pupils in one place. They are also disputed internationally when this promotion of talent is of a cognitive and intellectual nature. Such institutions are most readily accepted if they are boarding schools providing supportive aid in the fields of music, ballet or sport because they call for a great deal of practise or training for which highly-qualified teachers are not always to be found. In the former GDR (German Democratic Republic), such schools existed for mathematically, scientifically and technically-gifted pupils and those displaying talent in foreign languages, music and sport. In some cases, these schools have been kept on as "*Gymnasien* of a Special Character", i.e. with an extended teaching programme in the special sector.

A school for the elite in Germany is currently being planned for highly-gifted pupils. The Federal State of Saxony has decided to make the former *Fürstenschule St. Afra*, in Meißen, a *Gymnasium* for highly-talented pupils from 2002 onwards.

Extramural competitions to kindle talent

Competitions are ideal for arousing, stimulating and challenging talent among children of school age. This is an excellent means of linking the objectives of stimulation and motivation on a broad basis among pupils with the discovery and challenge of highly-gifted and able pupils.

There are more than 20 national pupil competitions a year in Germany, as well as many at regional and *Land* (state) level. There is something to interest almost

The identical twins, Matthias and Michael, are classical examples of highly-gifted mathematicians. In 1997 they won both the Hessian Mathematics Competition and the national German Mathematics Olympics. Even at preschool age they were fascinated by number games. In the daily round and at school, however, they deliberately do not want to exclude themselves from the company of their contemporaries. They want to experience the same things as normal young persons. They are supported in this respect by their parents and assisted by their school, the Humboldt Gymnasium in Bad Homburg, which is in a position to integrate the particular needs of the highly-gifted twins into the normal curriculum.

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every field of talent and interest. The intention of these competitions is to kindle and promote participants' readiness to concern themselves intensively with a certain subject, thus enhancing their knowledge and skills. Devoting oneself to particular competition encourages independent work and mobilizes energy and staying power when experimenting, seeking solutions, learning and practising. The challenge of the competition provides participants with information about their personal skills and helps them establish their position vis-à-vis others in the non-school sector. By meeting other participants, they experience persons of their own age with similar interests and talents who are normally not always easy to find. Many competitions also offer pupils the opportunity to work in groups to prepare a joint entry for a particular competition, thus encouraging the social aspect. In other words, competitions are an excellent means of awakening, discovering and promoting a wide variety of interests, talents and skills.

It is of interest to note that most competitions do not create rivalry among participants since all entries are assessed on an individual and absolute basis. Often, preparations for a competition as a school activity are simultaneously an effective way of promoting talent. In many cases, competition themes can be integrated into classroom work. Outstanding competition entries are rewarded with money or other prizes, and, in part, with grants to study or spend some time abroad.

German Pupils Academy

One special form of continued promotive help for competition prize-winners - and other exceptionally-gifted and motivated young persons - is the *Deutsche SchülerAkademie* (see title). This school as set up in 1988 by the *Verein Bildung und Begabung* e.V.(Education and Talent Association Inc), Bonn, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology. In 1993, the German *Bundestag* gave its approval for the establishment of this programme by including it as a permanent item in the federal budget. The Education Ministers Conference also expressed its unanimous support of this measure in 1994.

"Three voices" from the pupils Academy

Maybe I found my stay at the academy so positive because I met people who were much more unconventional and open than they are at my school and no one was ostracized for displaying interest in literature or philosophy. I have made many friends through the academy and we still meet regularly.

Silke Fischer

Particularly the contact with highly-motivated people from a wide range of subject areas was one of my most impressionable experiences. The interdisciplinary character of this academy, which was also reflected in the allocation of rooms, was one of the basic factors. It not only allowed people at the academy to devote themselves to a special field, but also offered an active academic and cultural framework in which the course work enjoyed a central - but not exclusive - position. The interdisciplinary activities also offered participants the opportunity to get to know each other better and establish closer contact. The theatrical and musical events were a great enrichment of life in general at the academy.

Jorg Ruppert

Actually, I can answer the question about what I learnt in one word: tolerance (which I thought I already had). My feeling of solidarity was boosted, my motivation enhanced, my desire to do things rekindled, my curiosity and thirst for knowledge increased. Most all (apart from factual knowledge), I learnt more in human terms, and my confidence, as far as commitment is concerned, has grown. I hope that more young people will be given the opportunity in future to take part in programmes of this nature.

Nora Weideschat

Aims, conception, content

The aim of the academy is to offer pupils an intellectual and social challenge, to promote their skills, to put them in touch with each other and, under the guidance of qualified teaching staff, to let them work on demanding assignments within their particular sphere of interest. The level is frequently that of university courses in the early semesters.

The conception of the academies is based on the following principles: The participants selected are exceptionally able and motivated young persons. They live and work together in one place for two-and-half weeks. They are taught by academics, teachers and other experts who introduce them to a specific subject area. They are encouraged to work on their own and, in so doing, acquaint themselves with the standards and basic rules of academic learning.

One of the central components of the course work is the production of a documentation: each group writes a report on the progress and results of their work which are then assembled in a brochure (documentation) after the academy has finished. In this way, reproduction, elaboration and elucidation of studies and study findings, logical thought processes etc are practised. Another important feature is rotation, in which course members slip into the role of teacher and tell participants from other courses about their work.

Apart from the course programme there are numerous other activities open to all participants: theatre, music, excursions, choir, sport, guest lectures etc. Because of their social and interdisciplinary importance, about the same amount of time each day is devoted to these interdisciplinary activities as it is to the course programme.

During the academy, pupils live in similarly interested and motivated groups of young persons and course leaders. This community experience, characterized by a stimulating, open and tolerant climate, is, in retrospect, the most important and valuable aspect for many course participants. Another result of the academy is the quick establishment of lasting contacts and friendships beyond the confines of the academy, which, inter alia, are also maintained via the *Club der Ehemaligen* (club for former academy participants), often into the study stage.

Well above-average ability, marked interest in the courses offered and a high level of motivation are expected of the pupils. The progammes are tailored to Classes 10 to 12.

The Association for Education and Talent urges suitable pupils to

PHOTO: BILDUNG UND BEGABUNG E. V.

apply for participation in pupil academies. It addresses successful participants in the appropriate pupil competitions and follows the suggestions and recommendations of the schools which are specially approached in this respect.

Participation in the academy exerts a positive influence, in particular, on personal motivational and social qualities, such as interests, self-assurance, cooperation and the ability to mix with others. About half the participants also change their opinion about their personal talent. In most cases, they rate it higher, but in some cases lower than it was before. Moreover, a comparison with unsuccessful applicants, whose ability and motivation are nevertheless comparable with those of the academy participants, shows that the effects are clearly attributable to the academy.

Surveys of former participants now studying revealed that attendance of the academy had made their move from school to university easier and had proved to be of decisive help in choosing a course of study. In retrospect, they regarded the independent work they had practised in the courses as the most important part of the academy.

Between the years 1988 and August 1997, a total of 36 such academies took place, involving over 3,000 pupils of both sexes. In the summer of 1997, six further academies with 546 participants were organized. The course subjects included:

- Modern Cryptology
- Electrochemistry
- Spanish
- The Ambivalence of Freedom
- Journalistic Writing
- Can Insects Do Origami?
- Chinese
- The Enterprise in Our Economic System
- Can Opera Be Saved?
- Topology
- Food Analysis
- Architecture: Representative of Power?

Resume

Promoting outstanding talent is not just a fashionable phenomenon. As far back as 1928, William Stern, a professor of pyschology at Hamburg University wrote: "The realization that the provision of supportive aid for highly gifted children is a socially-ethical commitment of the first degree has spread more and more in recent years ..."

Today, 70 years later, the topicality of this observation has hardly changed. It is an undeniable fact that so much has been undertaken to the advantage of talent promotion in Germany in the last 15 years that it is now one of the European countries doing the most in this respect. Even so, the ignorance and, indeed, indifference, vis-à-vis this problem area are still widely spread. The aim of further activity in this field must be to overcome the lack of knowledge (frequently of ideological stamp) and prejudices by providing training and further training programmes, especially for educators and psychologists, to spread the points of departure for the promotion of talent, and to provide an overall climate in which not only outstanding achievements in sport and music are acknowledged and rewarded.

Faida

Just by watching and asking her older sisters, Faida, a Turkish girl, had learnt to read both Turkish and German by the age of four, as well as do sums fairly effortlessly within the 100-range.

As a result, her father wanted her to start school which, however, because of the regulations, was not possible. Consequently, prior to starting school, Faida was taught every morning for the two years prior to school in a preschool group of highly-gifted children

(with IQs ranging from 120 to 135). One of her favourite daily occupations was writing letters and short texts on a typewriter. She was loud and cheerful, and tried to assume a special position amongst her comrades which didn't exactly make positive social contacts easy. As soon as she entered the normal first-year class at her local primary school there were behaviourial, learning and teaching problems.

Her class teacher and the school principal, however, realized that Faida's cognitive performance level was way above that of her classmates, and, with the father's consent, suggested she jump Class 1 into Class 2. The Class 2 teacher thought little of this measure and agreed only grudgingly - on a temporary basis. Among other things, she demanded that Faida should be able to write as well as a second-grader within the space of two weeks, otherwise she couldn't stay in Class 2. With great effort and parental assistance, Faida - to her teacher's surprise - negotiated this hurdle but (maybe for this very reason) continued to be rejected by the teacher, even moreso than she had experienced in the preschool period. Faida's scholastic performance was average to good, but her social behaviour problematic at times; she only had one (Turkish) friend in the class. The new teacher in Class 3 experienced Faida as a pupil who was variably motivated, usually good - but also "lazy", and whose performance fluctuated. When, after a while, he learnt that Faida had been regarded as highly-talented even during the preschool period, and that her intellectual capacities were well above average, he saw her through different eyes. He now tried to view and interpret her behaviour from this new angle, and, in his own words, adapted his teaching to her, providing her with more individualized and "suitable" learning programmes. With regard to performance, Faida was among the best in the class and managed to achieve better social integration.

(from Beispiele 1/96)

BASIC EDUCATIONAL QUESTIONS

What is talent?

1. Particularly gifted (or here highly-gifted) persons are not a special species of mankind: being talented is something quite normal. At the same time, we must bear in mind that each person is unique. Persons with outstanding talents are not only as diverse as the talents themselves, but also diverse in the form and particular quality of their talents.
2. Talent cannot be measured according to a specifically laid-down scale: it is subject to development processes.
3. The adjective "talented", or the term "talented persons" suggests a completed process. In development psychology we now speak of a lifelong process of change; this applies to the variable "Being Talented", "Becoming Talented" and "Talent Endowing" which, in principle, all work together in a highly-gifted person. This dynamic inter-related structure must always been borne in mind for the development, recogition, promotion, and performance, production, effect in the case of highly-gifted persons.
4. Special skills develop in the course of (early) childhood or whilst at school, or not until adolescence, or even adulthood. It is important to give children the opportunity to develop their particular talents. All normal children are born with general learning ability. Stimulation from the material and social environment, and, in particular, adults as conveyors, as mediators of learning, play an important part in the further development process.
5. Special talent can only be promoted, however, if the general talents are adequately developed. In other words, to ensure that potentially gifted children can develop their particular talents, they must experience qualitatively appropriate stimulation, assistance and education. Only on this basis is the fostering of special gifts, and thus highly-talented persons, educationally, psychologically - and in the democratic sense - efficient and justified.
(Extract of an article entitled *Besondere Begabungen in der Schule* (Outstanding Talent in School), published in Beispiele 1/96, Hanover)

Klaus K. Urban is professor of special educational psychology, Department of Educational Science, University of Hanover.

The distinguishing features of highly-gifted pupils

When commencing school, particularly gifted children, who, in their early childhood and preschool days, have grown up in a stimulating and supportive environment, can be described as follows - mainly in respect of their cognitive qualities.

As a rule, they display

- a marked degree of curiosity and desire to undertake independent exploration;
- quick and effective powers of comprehension, even in the case of more complex problems;
- very early interest in letters, numbers and other symbols; particularly fond of activities involving classification and organization;
- fluid thought processses; discovering new, original ideas (orally or with materials);
- early indications of reflexive and logical thought, metacognition;
- outstanding memory;
- highly developed powers of concentration and exceptional perseverance in tackling self-imposed tasks (usually in the intellectual sector);
- spontaneous desire to learn to read, often accomplished independently between the ages of three and four;
- expressive, fluent speech, often using extensive vocabulary, not usual at this age; marked development in language structures and metalinguistic sector;
- Pronounced "individuality", marked need of self-guidance, and personal determination of activities and course of action;
- strong sense of justice and great (cognitive) sensitivity with regard to social relations and moral questions.

from: Klaus K. Urban, Beispiele 1/96

The possibilities of failing to recognize gifted pupils

It may happen, that, for instance

- the persistent asking of questions is regarded as annoying or dismissed as "exhibitionism",
- the outstanding reading skill of a child starting school is attributed the efforts of over-ambitious parents,
- a first-grader's marked interest in, say, astronomy, is dismissed as "nonsense",
- working methods and finding solutions which differ from those prescribed are rejected as inattentive, unsuitable, defiant or even undisciplined,
- the rapid mastery of learning material is attributed to extreme drill at home,
- reluctance to do exercises is regarded as lack of zeal, and day-dreaming as lethargy or lack of interest in classwork,
- the failure to do homework is interpreted as laziness,
- a class joker is regarded as a trouble-maker.

from: Klaus K. Urban, Beispiele 1/96

The role of the teacher

The consistent development of a concept of open and talent-developing teaching demands a high degree of competence on the part of teachers, i.e. extensive knowledge of how to proceed, empathy and sense of responsibility, ability to do justice in varying roles to highly-differing requirements, creativeness, as well as a positive self-concept, knowledge of oneself and personal openness.

- If we want to be receptive to the singularity of every child, we must also grant ourselves the right, and have the courage to be singular, too.
- If we want to identify gifted childen, we must know something about "talent signals" of both a positive and negative nature.
- If we want to help highly-gifted children, we must arouse our own creative and productive powers.
- If we want to understand highly-gifted children better, we should know our own talents better and have striven to develop and perfect them, know their possibilities and limits.
- If we want to give highly-gifted children promotive help, we must ask ourselves if we are confident and strong enough to admit and accept the fact that there are children who, for instance, are more intelligent and receptive than we are, able to learn more quickly than ourselves or, that in certain fields, they have considerably more expert knowledge than we can ever hope to have.

The question whether pupils can be given the opportunity to learn in such creative and productive manner can be regarded as a touchstone for effective and purposeful "differentiated education for the highly-gifted".

from: Klaus K. Urban, Beispiele, 1/96

MOTIVATION THROUGH COMPETITION

The Education and Talent Association Inc.

The Association *Bildung und Begabung e.V.* (see title) was established in 1985 on the intitiative of the *Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft* (an association funded by German industry for the sponsorship of German science and young academics). The association's mandate is to develop and implement extramural measures to stimulate, identify and promote gifted and interested young persons, especially those of school age. The association is non-profit making and non-denominational.

In order to awaken, stimulate and challenge talent, the association lays great store by competitions. Out of the twenty national competitions held annually in Germany, the following are held by the association: national competitions in Mathematics and Foreign Languages, a selective competition for participation in the International Mathematics Olympics and the Creative Contemporary History competition. The association provides direct assistance by organizing the German Pupils Academy and seminars for prize-winners in both competitions. It also awards places for comparable academic programmes in the USA.

The association's other spheres of activity include an information service for all sectors concerned with the promotion and research of talent, the organization of further training events and specialized conferences, and the publication of its own series of informative material. The association's projects are financed mainly by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology and the *Stifterverband*. Individual projects are also financially assisted by the *Länder* (states), foundations and private sponsors.

The association (1997) has a staff of 15 and an annual budget of DM 5 million.

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D-53144 Bonn
Tel: +49-228-302266
Fax: +49-228-302270
e-mail: 100536.146@compuserve.com

Further organizations concerned with the development and research of talent in Germany

Deutsche Gesellschaft für das Hochbegabte Kind e.V.
(German Society for the Highly-Gifted Child Inc.)
Sonderhauser Straße 80
D-12249 Berlin
Tel: +49-30-7 11 77 18

Arbeitskreis Begabungsforschung und Begabtenförderung e.V.
(Working Group for Talent Research and Promotion Inc.)
c/o Rostock University
August-Bebel-Straße 28
D-18055 Rostock
Tel: +49-381-4 93 47 82
Fax: +49-381-4 98 26 65

Institut für Begabungsforschung und Begabtenförderung in der Musik
(Institute for Talent Research and Promotion in Music)
Bahnhofstraße 64
D-33102 Paderborn
Tel: +49-5251-30 01 11
Fax: +49-5251-31 00 13

Initiative zur Förderung Hochbegabter Kinder e.V.
(Initiative for the Promotion of Highly-Talented Children Inc.)
Hindenburgstraße 42
D-70825 Korntal-Munchingen
Tel: +49-711-83 35 69

Hochbegabtenförderung e.V.
(High Talent Promotion Inc.)
Am Pappelbusch 45
D-44803 Bochum
Tel: +49-234-9 35 67-0
Fax: +49-234-9 35 67-25
e-mail: hbf.@geod.geonet.de

International associations

World Council for Gifted and Talented Children
c/o International Center for Gifted Education and
Talent Development
University of Iowa
210 Lindquist Center
Iowa City, Iowa 52242 USA
Tel: +1-319-3 35 61 48
Fax: +1-319-3 35 51 51
e-mail: wcgtc@list.uiowa.edu

European Council for High Ability (ECHA)
c/o Bildung und Begabung e.V.
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UNCONVENTIONAL, BUT NOT ÉLITIST

Private schools supplement state education programmes

PHOTO: DAVID ALGERMISSEN

Hermann Horstkotte

In May this year, Jan Schnirpel became junior world champion in weight-lifting. In summer he successfuly completed his education at the *Jugenddorf-Christophorus* school, Rostock, and can now commence his university studies. Jan owes this twofold success to his school. Its curriculum offers competitive athletes special training opportunities for mind and body. The majority of the pupils, however, are perfectly "normal". Many parents choose the *Christophorus* school because of its Christian principles. Even so, there is no ideological compulsion. Many pupils attend this school simply because - in addition to the competitive sport department - there are also special classes for the intellectually highly-gifted.

The Rostock talent-forge is an independent school, i.e. non-state. The designation "private school" is only a vague indication of the situation in Germany since both private and state schools are "public schools". They are mainly financed by taxpayers' money. Additional payments by parents must not be so high that only the wealthy have access to such schools. The German constitution, the Basic Law, acknowledges the importance of "independent" schools in a pluralist society, which is based on the idea of free competition. The state can only make a limited contribution to these schools because it is bound by the principle of ideological neutrality. Private schools must enjoy the same status as state schools, but do not have to be similarly organized. This equality exists if the teaching aims and successes of private schools are equal to those at state schools. The school inspectorate ensure that these "independent public schools" fulfil the generally-binding requirements of quality applicable to all schools.

School attendance is compulsory in Germany and usually ends on completion of Class 9. In the 1995/96 school year, the school population came to a good 8.5 mil-

PHOTO VOLMER/BILDER DER WELT

lion children and adolescents at state schools, but no more than 350,000, i.e. fewer than 5 percent, at private schools. Secondary education is aimed at unlimited acquisition of *Hochschulreife*, i.e. university entrance qualification. There were 705,000 pupils from state schools compared with 76,000 from private schools. These figures indicate quite clearly that private schools enjoy only marginal importance in Germany. Even in "secondary education", state schools seem preferable to more than four out of five pupils or their parents. This is not least because the broadly-spanned teaching programme offered by state schools also includes supportive measures for the talented pupils. These are often in the form of extracurricular activities which supplement and deepen what is normally taught in class, or special schools. "The creation of an elite", i.e. the identification and promotion of talent in Germany, continues to take place mainly in state schools.

The chief difference between private and other schools is their specific concept of man, which deviates from concepts of a more conventional nature, and the corresponding education provided. Most of them are modelled on the two major Churches whose school tradition is several centuries older than the state. Ideally, anyone successfully completing his education at a school of religious character, enters the adult world as a person of enduring substance, but with no professional advantage. Church foundations for the talented, for example, also assist students coming from state schools.

With more than 90,000 pupils, i.e. almost a quarter of all private schools, the non-denominational *Jugenddorf-Christophorus* schools enjoy great importance within the education system based on Christian principles. They are celebrating their fiftieth anniversary in 1997. Whereas state schools normally provide teaching in the mornings only, the *Jugenddorf* institutions are all-day schools, including the supervision of homework, or boarding schools. Both alternatives are particularly attractive if both parents go out to work.

Independent schools often reject the range of subjects offered at state schools, which they regard as too narrow. This is why, in particular, the Waldorf schools came into being. They were started by an employer in 1919 who wanted to provide the children of his staff with training closely related to life. Right from the outset, the Waldorf schools attached great value to handicraft and practical instruction. School reports and the inflexible ritual involved in promoting pupils to the next-higher class were replaced by individual assessments and forecasts on the development of each pupil. In this respect, the Waldorf schools continue to differ even today from state schools where, in senior classes, school reports and the arithmetically-calculated average mark are increasing in importance. At the present time, some 60,000 pupils are following this alternative education course in which personal motivation is decisive, rather than achievement pressure.

Modern societies are characterized mainly by the elite in various sectors of life. Hubert Markl, who, as president of the Max Planck Society, is a top representative of the German scientific elite, has constantly drawn attention to this. Canonized general education and the corresponding "schools for the elite" apparently enjoy greater importance in traditional, social patterns of a hierarchical nature than in those differentiated by function. Hans-Olaf Henkel, president of the National Association of German Industry (BDI), likes to point out that he did not complete his schooling and successfully entered the professional world at an early stage. Wolfgang Urban, managing director of Metro AG, the largest trade enterprise in Europe, attended various schools - whilst already following a profession - to qualify for a practice-related course of study at a *Fachhochschule* (Polytechnic).

Private all-day schools or boarding schools which lavish care on their pupils, over and above conventional training requirements, have an aura of luxury in Germany without providing any particular professional or social advantages with regard to career. "Private schools" have long gained a foothold in formal vocational and further training. Although there were still 306,000 persons attending state vocational institutions in 1995/96, the number at independent establishments had already grown to 42,000. This means that, at almost fifteen percent, the "private schools" have achieved a market share equal to the one they enjoy in the general, prevocational education sector.

"THE JOY OF ACHIEVEMENT"

Combining social and formal education is the objective at Salem, Germany's most famous private school

Pupils learn to help - by regularly visiting elderly or disabled persons, spending afternoons with large families, cooperating voluntarily in nature protection, such as in the preservation of endangered bird species.

Hermann Horstkotte

PHOTO ALFRED A. HAASE

Once a week the timetable includes *Bildung mit der Hand* (Manual Education) for boys and girls in the middle-school, i.e. the fourteen year olds. Depending on personal taste, the classroom for this activity is a carpenter's, car-mechanic's or goldsmith's workshop, not forgetting the kitchen. Activities for drawing and sculpture, choral and orchestral music promote the sensory and emotional skills of the young persons. At this private school housed in *Schloß Salem* on Lake Constance, in the German-Swiss border region, the pupils also learn the usual range of subjects - with greater choice, of course - taught at state schools, i.e. languages, mathematics, natural science etc up to *Hochschulreife* (university entrance). Apart from English and Latin, the pupils can take a third language (French, Spanish or Classical Greek). Depending on the individual pupil's interests, the broadly-spanned teaching programme is designed to kindle theoretical, practical and artistic skills and promote the vital "joy of achievement".

Salem is essentially a boarding school for over ninety percent of its pupils. It is divided into three school and age levels who reside in three parts of the palace grounds. The daily programme and rules differ at the three locations to accustom the young persons to greater independence and freedom - without overtaxing them prematurely. According to the founder, Kurt Hahn (1886-1974), boarding school life should ensure the unity of social and formal education, formation of personality and classroom instruction. This aim is realized by the individual teachers, each of whom, as mentor and tutor, lives together with fifteen to twenty pupils at the boarding school. From the middle-school onwards, the group elects one their number as "helper". The latter's job is to enhance the interplay with the mentor and the mutual understanding between the young persons and their teacher. The learning aim of "social competence", i.e. stimulating and compensating intercourse with each other, is taken very seriously at Salem.

Salem is an international education institution. Fifteen percent of the pupils and a number of the teachers come from other countries. Instead of the German *Abitur* (university entrance qualification), pupils may also acquire the International Baccalaureate (IB), recognized throughout the world. There is a lively exchange with similar schools around the globe which have joined forces in the Round Square Conference.

Attending this boarding school is not cheap. Even so, at DM 3000 a month, it is no higher than comparable schools of this quality in Europe and other parts of the world. Special scholarships also enable talented pupils without wealthy parents to attend Salem. Many former pupils make generous donations for this purpose.

ETON-ON-ELBE

A European school for the élite
Saxony revives a former tradition

It is not often that someone thinks fondly of his schooldays. "Theophrastus, Plautus and Terence, whom I studied at the greatest of ease in the narrow confines of a monastic-like school,were my world. How dearly would I like to relive those years, the only ones when I was really happy."

These words were spoken by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the most distinguished graduate of the *Wettin Fürstenschulen*. The Dresden Ministry of Education is using this eulogy to promote its European *Elitegymnasium* (an élite grammar/college preparatory school) project in the tradition of the legendary schools which, for centuries, were the jewel of Saxony's education system - which they are to become again.

St. Afra zu Meißen, one of the three former *Fürstenschulen*, is a run-of-the-mill district *Gymnasium* at the present time. But its days as such, in the old quarter of Meißen, are numbered. After alterations costing millions, this historic institution is to become a new type of state school combining the humanist ideal of the *Fürstenschulen* with the uninhibited East German attitude to the concept of an élite. To this will be added a pinch of reform education in the spirit of Salem and the English public schools, and a generous helping of post-turnaround enthusiasm. From the turn of the millenium onwards, some 300 pupils are to be prepared at this school for responsible functions within society.

The educational goal of this élite school, which has been conceived as an all-day and boarding school, is the Anglo-Saxon ideal of "educated persons". The skills meant by this can be gleaned from the plans of the Dresden school pioneers, reminiscent of the list of wishes a headhunter seeks in the ideal manager: broad education, ability to judge, resilience and sensitivity, self-assertion and readiness to compromise. St. Afra pupils are to learn how to "combine social commitment with leadership qualities". "We don't want to breed little Einsteins, but modern young executives with a capacity for teamwork," says Ursula Koch, the departmental head responsible for this project at the ministry.

Strict individual study, but also "living for others" have always been part of the spirit of these schools. Apart from St. Afra, Duke Moritz of Saxony also founded the two other *Fürstenschulen* in 1544: St. Augustin in Grimma and Schulpforta in present-day Saxony-Anhalt. The schools were open to all gifted children in the land, regardless of class or origin. In so doing, Moritz was inspired more by the preservation of power than egalitarian motives. In this way, the Saxon ruler was able to create a civil service loyal to him, and largely independent of the nobility.

The lustre of these institutions - whose pupils, in addition to Lessing, included philosphers such as Klopstock, Gellert, Fichte and von Ranke - faded with the passing of time. But even in the GDR (German Democratic Republic), where schools were all standardized on Soviet lines, St.Afra, St.Augustin and Schulpforta were able to retain their own special status, says Ralf Kopsel, from the Association of Former *Fürstenschule* Pupils and member of the foundation committee. "Self-education and mutual education were extremely important," says Klopsel, describing the spirit of the *Fürstenschulen*. The élitist idea was not predominant. "But the standard was, in fact, very high."

The plans leave no doubt about the fact, however, that the requirements at the new élite school in Saxony will be even greater. In the case of the proposed "pupil population", it can be assumed "that the learning content of the Saxon *Gymnasium* curricula can be covered in a much shorter period," it states in the ministerial draft. As a result, the *Fundamentum* - consisting of 24 weekly lessons - will be supplemented by an *Additum*, in which pupils can establish their own "individual points of emphasis"

In Classes 8 to 10, the school year will be divided into three terms to make continuous work possible in interdisciplinary projects. Great emphasis is to be placed on learning languages: a minimum of three foreign languages, including a classical language, will be compulsory for all pupils. A fourth language is considered desirable and a long stay abroad, including school attendance. In the senior classes, the future executives will have to complete only three instead of the usual two *Leistungskurse* (advanced courses). In addition, the élite pupils will nevertheless still have enough time left to perform "community services" or "cooperation with the cathedral works office" in Meißen.

But the St.Afra campus will no longer be "monastic". "We want to eliminate the classical distinction between classroom and recreation," says Frau Koch. St.Afra also intends to depart from the traditional image of teachers. At least some of the teachers will live and work together with the pupils, and always be on hand as "counsellors". As in former days, older pupils will help younger ones.

The élitist concept stands or falls by the selection of suitable candidates. Here, Saxony intends to adopt a revolutionary course for state schools. Whereas the teaching posts will be advertised worldwide, tests and "summer camps" are planned for the children - trial periods of a week - with lessons and boarding-school life - in which creative and social suitability will be scrutinized. The parents will also be screened. This is to sort out the over-ambitious parents or guardians who are anxious to have their children educated at the *Fürstenschule* for reasons of prestige only.

Just as Lessing only obtained a place at St.Afra with financial help from a benefactor, there will also be scholarships (grants) for *Fürstenschule* pupils in the 21st century. The plans propose to provide financial support to the tune of DM 1000 monthly for up to three-quarters of the pupils. Apart from the building costs of DM 52 million and staff costs, this will be the largest item in the state budget. Critics from the opposition in the Dresden *Landtag* (state parliament), who have nothing against an educational élite in principle, regard the award of scholarships as the only weak point in the whole concept. If a subsequent government decides to radically reduce the funds for state scholarships, they fear St.Afra will become a Nobel school after all.

Clemens Caspary/Die Zeit

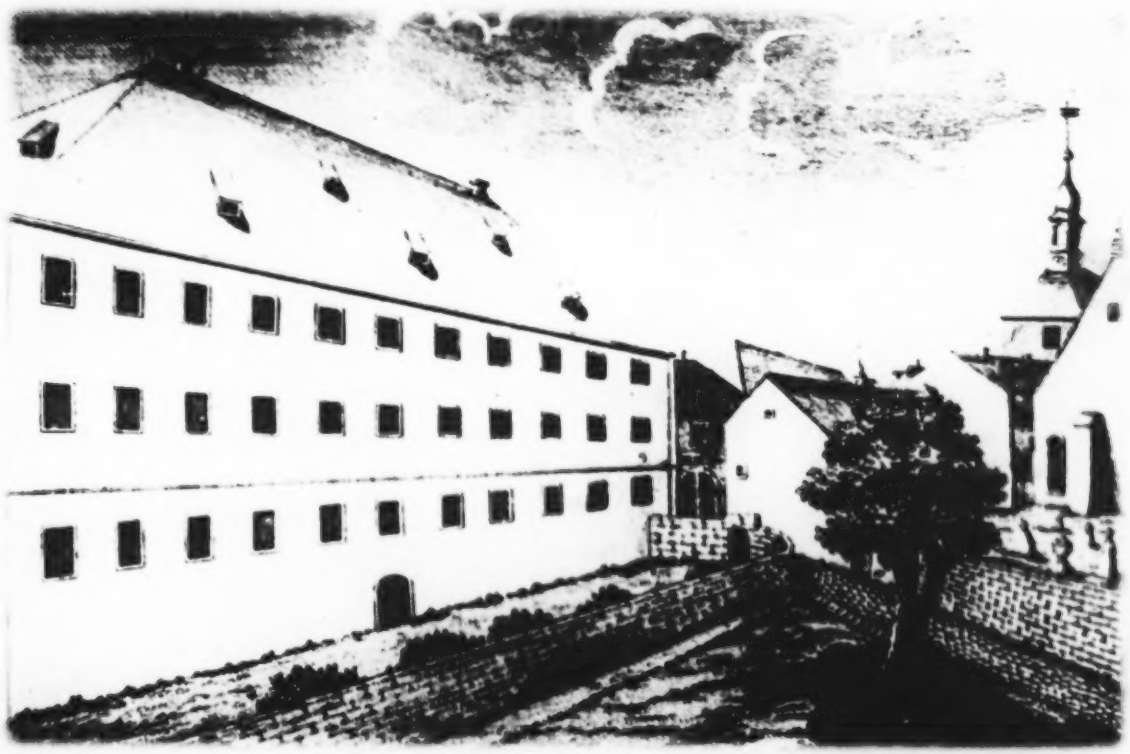


PHOTO: BILDERDIENST SÜDDEUTSCHER VERLAG GMBH

SCREENING THE MASSES

Private universities select their students

A certain amount of vexation is still discernible. Uwe Gericke says he felt as if he had been on display. "We had to fit squares together and simultaneously coordinate our behaviour without speaking to each other." The game lasted half an hour. Some had soon broken the rules, others got worked up afterwards. "A typical group-dynamic affair," says Gericke, "during which we were observed the whole time. Some walked around us making notes, whilst we asked ourselves what it was all about."

PHOTO DAVID ALDRIDGE

This supervised game, described by Uwe Gericke, is part of a procedure which the Private University of Witten-Herdecke employs to select its students. Anyone taking part must first of all have negotiated the first hurdle. The competition for a place at this university in the Ruhr begins with the completion of a curriculum vitae and written reasons for particularly wanting to study at Witten.

First and foremost, candidates must offer proof of professional experience - which does not only mean casual employment. The economics faculty requires candidates to have successfully completed a commercial or industrial training course, the medical faculty demands six months nursing practice - instead of the usual eight weeks required by state universities. The mark gained in *Abitur* (university entrance qualification), on the other hand, is of no import. "We are looking for students, not pupils," says Konrad Schily, founder and president of Witten University. "We are looking for persons who have a will of their own and not those who readily conform."

Witten is a good example of the way in which a selection procedure can mould the image of a university. Depending on the faculty, two to three experts process the applications and invite 120 to 150 candidates to come to Witten, of whom a third are eventually offered a place. For a whole day, they are subjected to interviews, group-dynamic games or dexterity tests. "Often," says Konrad Schily, "a candidate falls into a deep, black hole. The only important thing in this case is whether can extricate himself." It is not a case of reproducing uncritically knowledge one has learnt by heart. This is all part of a procedure in which candidates are not assessed according to a points system.

The University for Business Management in Vallendar, near Koblenz, is also a private institution, named after its benefactor, Otto Beisheim. Here, candidates have to undergo even more extensive examinations than in Witten. Unlike the latter, however, marks and test results are taken into account at Vallendar.

Candidates wishing to be invited to take the written test, must, in addition to *Abitur* and curriculum vitae, offer proof of a successfully completed course of trade training, or, alternatively three months practical experience in the commercial sector. 374 applicants fulfilled these requirements for the winter semester. They were invited to take the two-day written tests in May. First, their capacity to study is examined according to criteria devised by the Bonn Institute for Test and Talent Research - the institute, incidentally, which also devised the recently abandoned test for would-be medical students. But as if the Otto Beisheim University does not completely trust its own tests, it publishes a brochure explaining which techniques can be used to solve the problems - including illustrative examples.

Language tests follow on the second day. A high standard of English is presumed. 520 points are required to pass the *Toefl-Test*. This corresponds to the requirements US universities expect foreign applicants to fulfil. Candidates are also tested in a second language of their choice from the following: Italian, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese or Russian. "These language tests have no more than a threshhold function," says Anke Brühl-Tschuk, head of the department for student affairs at Vallendar. "It suffices to pass them, no matter how well."

The study-aptitude test, on the other hand, is graded jointly with the *Abitur* according to a points system. Unlike Witten, the ranking of total points obtained decides who has reached the final stage, i.e. a one-day interview, a lecture group and joint discussion.The 36 examiners busy themselves with this for two days. Only 70 candidates are finally selected. The university is of the opinion that all this effort pays off. "Only one or two students per year-group break off their studies prematurely here," says Anke Brühl-Tschuk. The situation in Witten is similar. In comparison, the dropout level at state universities is around 30 percent.

Among those who were offered a place and successfully completed a course of study at Witten was Uwe Gericke. From there he obtained a post as research assistant at Eichstätt Catholic University Economics Department in Ingolstadt, Bavaria. Here, not only was his specialist knowledge in demand, but also his experience of the selection procedure at Witten. Ingolstadt was dissatisfied with the students sent there by the ZVS (Central Allocation Office). Most of them came from the region - or not at all - because they didn't like the place allocated them.

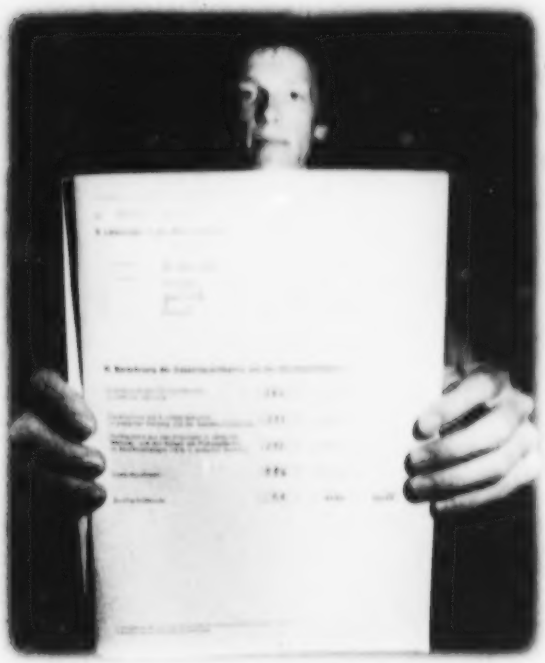
Ingolstadt has now devised its own selection procedure to help overcome this unsatisfactory situation. The Bavarian Education Ministry gave permission for a pilot scheme to be tried out over a period of two years. The initial result: a quarter of the 240 applicants-attracted surprisingly by the hurdle - were from outside Bavaria. They are of the opinion in Ingolstadt that this experiment could well become the model for state universities. For certain types of state higher education institutions, e.g. art and music colleges, selection procedures have always been a matter of course.

Imke Henkel/Suddeutsche Zeitung

AVERAGE MARK OR INTERVIEW?

Amended Framework Act for Higher Education
New regulations for university admission

Since the beginning of the 1997/98 winter semester, higher education institutions in Baden-Württemberg have been able to choose up to forty percent of the first-year students for a course of study in admission-restricted disciplines by means of their own selection procedure.



The University of Heidelberg is the first to adopt this procedure for sport and biology.

Evaluations of this nature have been tried out for some time in Lower Saxony and higher education institutions of the *Norderverbund* (northern association). They are a matter of course at art, sports and music colleges in all the *Bundesländer* (federal states).

Now a new Framework Act is to catch up with reality, which is rapidly racing ahead in the *Länder* (states). On 19 August 1997, the members of the Federal Government-Federal States Working Group agreed to compromise on the content of a new Higher Education Framework Act.In this context, agreement was also reached on the highly controversial question of whether and to what extent higher education institutions should be be granted the right to select students for the individual disciplines. This matter was the subject of fierce contoversy not least because of the unavoidable question of the future status of the *Abitur*, (university entrance qualification) which has always been the decisive criterion for university admission.

The bill proposes that universities be given the right to select up to twenty percent of the students wishing to follow courses of study in nationwide admission-restricted subjects. Basically, *Abitur* will continue to provide access to all courses of study. It is not planned to replace it with entrance examinations or other admission restrictions. Even so, universities are to be allowed to choose part of the studies applicants on the basis of "suitability and motivation", by means of interviews or achievement requirements for specific courses. By this means, the chance of being admitted immediately will be given to applicants who, because of inadequate *Abitur* grades, might, according to the standard procedure, otherwise have to accept a long waiting period or never be selected at all. According to the draft law, "professional training or experience" in the relevant fields of study could likewise be decisive criteria in the award of a study place within an internal university selection procedure.

Over and above the proportial distribution undertaken by the Central Office for the Allocation of Study Places (ZVS), achievement and competition are to play a greater part in future in the award of places for disciplines with nationwide restricted admission. In this way, able students will have the opportunity to study at the university of their choice if they do not live in the latter's catchment area.

In their proposals for the new Framework Act for Higher Education, published early March, the states with a Social Democratic government originally rejected selection procedures for universities. Anke Brunn (SPD), North Rhine-Westphalia's Science Minister,

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summed up her party's position thus: "No *Abitur* after *Abitur*." Although Hans Zehetmair, Bavaria's Minister of Education, announced in a government statement in January that the universities in his state would be permitted to devise their own criteria for the selection of candidates on a trial basis, this was "by no means the go-ahead for the introduction of university entrance examinations in general - instead of or in addition to *Abitur*." The latter, he said, should retain its nationwide basic function as the entitlement to study.

Hans Joachim Meyer (CDU), Saxony's Minister of Science, took the opposite view by proposing that the selection of all students should to be left entirely to the universities themselves. In this way, university entrance would be based on student selection (in two respects), instead of through the ZVS central allocation procedure. "I must provide university faculties with the opportunity," Meyer argued, "of being allowed to scrutinize *Abitur* certificates to ascertain that a candidate has the relevant subjects. The marks also play a part in this. Even then, there will undoubtedly still be a number of unclear cases. Universities must have the right to learn more about students in a personal interview. This procedure would offer universities the great chance to compete for the most suitable applicants for a particular course of study."

Competition among universities, which is designed to provide a more efficient handling of the taxpayers' money and students' time, has nevertheless been given sparse treatment in the new bill. The contradictory nature of the compromise reached in the latter is reflected in its mixed nature. The bill does not propose a genuine right of choice on the part of universities. The *Abitur* is to retain its function as general entitlement to university admission. The majority of the education ministers insist that the *Abitur* is of equal value in all the *Länder* (states) and consequently provides the basic right to study at any university, and that all universities offer the same teaching quality. Although universities are to be given the opportunity to implement internal selection procedures, this right is limited to twenty percent of the courses with nationwide restricted admission which, in relation to the total number of applicants, represents a very small percentage.

In the science ministries and university administrations, however, the selection of students by the universities themselves is being discussed more from the narrow angle of how to cope with the large number of students in the face of empty coffers, rather than from the point of view of competition for the best studies applicants. The problem of the large number of students is also preventing the anthroposophical Private University of Witten-Herdecke and the University for Business Management in Vallendar from becoming models for state universities. The reason is simple: there are just not enough teaching staff at German universities to conduct half-hour interviews with the thousands of applicants. Manfred Schmidt, a Heidelberg political scientist, puts the situation in a nutshell by pointing out that, at American universities large numbers of staff are employed exclusively for the job of selecting applicants. In contrast, at the Institute for Politics, Heidelberg University, four professors, a handful of research assistants and temporary lecturers have to look after 1300 students. It is to be feared that the teaching staff at overloaded German universities can undertake no more than a schematic assessment of *Abitur* marks. To quote Josef Lange, general secretary of the Higher Education Rectors Conference, what universities need to do - supplementary to *Abitur* - is to define their selection criteria to establish the calling, aptitude and motivation of applicants. The increased scope the *Länder* are providing in the amended Framework Act for Higher Education definitely offers the opportunity to implement new experimental procedures.

Klaus Michael Mutsch

PHOTO: DAVID ACHARKIS

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